



Good News Keeps On Going and Going

A report on the continuing ministry of perhaps Adventism's most influential former minister and teacher.

by Michael Saucedo

VICTORIOUS CHRISTIAN LIVING, WHAT HAPPENS after death, and depression caused by tubal ligation. These are subjects tackled head on in the ever-expanding ministry of Good News Unlimited (GNU).

As Desmond Ford, spiritual founder and leader of Good News Unlimited proclaims, "Ours is a growing ministry meeting the total needs of Christians. The balance of life is based firmly upon the triad of Spiritual, Mental, and Physical well-being."

GNU's headquarters, manned by seven people, is located in Auburn, California. Good News Unlimited also has regional offices in Australia, Canada, and South Africa. They process publication requests and serve as bases for GNU ministers. Currently, there are full-time and part-time pastors in Australia. In other countries, several people minister on a volunteer basis. Ford refers to them as "non-denominational,

evangelical, para-church ministers."

When asked about GNU's budget, Ford stated, "We live and survive on about half a million dollars a year, which many Adventists pay for." Of this, \$340,000 goes to media output. Tangible contributions are made by offerings, nonsolicited speaking fees, book/tape donations, and paid-for radio time. Intangible contributions are made by what Ford calls, "a million enthusiastic gospel people who do all they can to push the GNU ministry one way or another."

On fundraising, Ford says, "We never push money. If at any time the money dries up, we would take that as a signal from the Lord to move on into other ministries and resign from this one." But Pastor Roy Gee, editor of *Good News Unlimited* magazine, interjects, "It is really breathtaking how the money comes in. It just comes in!"

Good News Unlimited had its beginning before 1981 when Ford was called to Pacific Union College. He sensed a strong current of revival rippling throughout Adventism. At the time, he remembers commenting to his wife, Gillian, "Are we going to catch the wave at its crest?"

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Pacific Union College was inundated with requests for Ford to speak. These speaking engagements included doctors' seminars, ministers' meetings, and weeks of prayer at Adventist campuses. The talks produced thousands of contacts in the North American Division alone. Dr. Ford remarks, "It's the result of those meetings that GNU started. Those individuals are really the nucleus of GNU. All this happened before I left Pacific Union College."

Later, at the Glacier View Conference, in 1981, Dr. Ford defended his position on the Investigative Judgment. This marked the beginning of action to revoke his credentials to minister within the ranks of Adventism. The Actual revocation of his credentials provided the catalyst to embark on this successful, independent avenue to spread the gospel, which Ford calls "a positive ministry, not a negative one."

After Glacier View, GNU moved to an apartment in Auburn, California, along with a few people like the Fords, Smuts van Rooyen, and Marian Fritz. There were seminars and radio to establish the GNU ministry upon. "Then Gillian put out a tiny little rag which grew and grew and has now become the *Good News Unlimited* magazine under the editorship of Pastor Roy Gee," states Ford.

The magazine has a current circulation approaching 6,000 subscriptions, and reaches 44 countries as far flung as Finland, New Zealand, South Africa, and the Philippines. It is published only in English. However, the magazine is translated into many different languages by the receiving parties, including

Polish, Spanish, and Romanian.

Other publications within the GNU ministry include a catalogue listing of more than a dozen books ranging in topics from theology, stress, and personal tragedy to healthful cooking. Good News Unlimited's perennial best seller is *Crisis*, a commentary on Revelation. Dr. Ford points out that GNU has about 50,000 books circulating around the world.

Good News Unlimited also has a cassette tape ministry with hundreds of subscribers receiving presentations by Ford, van Rooyen, Gee, Calvin

Edwards, Noel Mason, Brad McIntyre, Peter Johanson, Kenneth Kantzer, and others. They also have a video tape ministry, dealing mainly with medical issues and physiology, including selections on cancer, diabetes, obesity, and the Christian view of sex.

As part of an ongoing ministry to developing countries, many books and cassettes are sent overseas free of charge. Africa is one major beneficiary of this program.

A less well-known part of GNU is the letter ministry. Ford says, "We send out hundreds and hundreds of personal letters each year. Friends will send names of ailing members and they each get a brief personal letter rather than a form letter." He sees this as an important part of GNU's ministry.

For GNU's radio ministry, shows are produced locally. However, Ford has on many occasions traveled to Los Angeles and Oregon to personally address issues ranging from theology to the health message.

Ford has been interviewed on the Walter Martin Group's "Christian Research Institute." He has even appeared with well-known

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northern Californian media personality "Captain Carrot" (Cary Nosler) to discuss aspects of healthy living, and has appeared on "The John Ankerburg Show" and "California Tonight."

In terms of radio and television, Ford estimates that GNU makes close to 500 media presentations a year, since its programs air five days a week in some cities. In Canada, they reach every province either by radio or television.

Apart from publications and media output, seminars account for a large amount of time spent by GNU members. Hundreds of presentations are made every year. Some are done locally at GNU's headquarters, but most are made abroad.

Both Ford and Gee get speaking requests, including engagements at Adventist churches like Capital Memorial and Sligo. When they spoke in Germany, all degreed church scholars were present and all meetings were published in church papers. "They [Seventh-day Adventist churches] are increasingly opening their doors," says Ford.

Gillian Ford has also developed an increasingly active ministry. She conducts many seminars on depression caused by women's hormonal changes related to premenstrual syndrome and tubal ligation. She also addresses stress, personal tragedy, and grief recovery.

Moving away from the "nuts and bolts" operations, and toward ascertaining GNU's philosophical underpinnings, Ford outlined his view of GNU's role in gospel ministry and its future direction. He quickly pointed out, "Good News Unlimited does not claim any sort of infallibility. Good News Unlimited wants to clearly proclaim what the Bible teaches."

Without criticizing the Adventist Church, Ford regrets its tendency to major in minor issues when the everlasting gospel should be

trumpeted. He says prophecy is only *one* way of revealing the gospel, and describes how GNU has distinguished itself from traditional Adventism in this area.

"Good News Unlimited does not teach prophecy with specific dates, since no apocalyptic scholar in Adventism believes that stuff down to the dates," says Ford. It creates unstable beliefs that the church has been so ready to drop when they have turned out wrong. He goes on, "We [Adventists] used to teach East-West Armageddon. We've dropped about 20 'major' teachings in the last 100 years. I know what most of the scholars think and I know many of them personally, and we at GNU are saying what the vast majority of those scholars already think. They just aren't free to say it, whereas we at GNU *can* say it!"

Good News Unlimited is part of a broad interactive network with other Christian groups. It enjoys its closest ties with other Sabbatarian groups such as the Seventh-Day Baptists and the Church of God—Seventh-Day. As Gee explains, Adventists are so successful that they don't know a great deal about other Sabbath groups. They are so into their own *total* world. But other Sabbath groups know about their successful big sister, Adventism. Members of GNU have spoken to the Church of Christ, Pentecostals, and many other different faiths. "We respond to wherever the name of Christ is honored and Scripture is upheld," says Ford.

When asked how he would want GNU's purpose to be understood, without missing a beat, Ford said that rather than exalting things that are pride engendering, such as "We are the remnant; we are the people," at GNU, it is Christ exalted, the gospel exalted, the Scriptures exalted. GNU embodies Paul's exhortation, "We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus Our Lord." That is the ministry of Good News Unlimited.